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COMOR-D-24/157
Revised

24 September 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR: Committee on Overhead Reconnaissance

SUBJECT: Estimated OXCART Requirement for
Monthly Reconnaissance of Cuba

1. It is requested that you advise this office prior to cob Friday, 25 September, of any suggestions you may have regarding changes to the attached. Please do this by telephone so the paper may be forwarded to USIB as soon as possible.

2. It is suggested that the last sentence of the first paragraph be amended as follows: Delete "which are the subject of another study in progress" and substitute "COMOR was without the benefit of a study in progress on this factor which could of course considerably change the COMOR estimate of the number of missions which might be necessary because of the need to avoid known SAM sites."

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Executive Secretary
Committee on Overhead Reconnaissance

Attachment:
Subject paper

Copies 2, 3 State TCO
4 DIA
5, 6, 7, 8 DIA TCO
9 OACSI TCO
10, 11 ONI TCO
12, 13, 14, 15 AFNIN TCO
16, 17 NSA TCO
18, 19, 20 NRO TCO

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COMOR-D-24/157

Revision

24 September 1964

Estimated OXCART Requirement for Monthly
Reconnaissance of Cuba

1. At a special restricted session of the USIB on 16 September, the Chairman requested the COMOR to review our reconnaissance experience over Cuba last year to determine how many OXCART missions per month (in lieu of the U-2) would be required to satisfy our high-altitude photographic collection requirements in that area. Our conclusions are tentative in the absence of operational experience with the OXCART project and do not take into account vulnerability factors, which are the subject of another study in progress.

Comparison of OXCART and GOLDEN TREE

2. The OXCART flying a single flight line per mission is capable of providing interpretable photography of the entire land area of Cuba with two missions under optimum weather conditions and has some advantages over the U-2. Its effective swath width is reported to be 70 miles with resolutions ranging from 1.1 feet at nadir to 2.5 to 3 feet 35 miles from nadir as compared with the U-2 using camera Mode 5 which has a swath

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width of 47 miles and resolution of 2 to 3 feet. OXCART, however, suffers from certain limitations in this area especially, a limited capability for altering course which at present would permit only one flight line per mission. These restrictions may moderate early in 1965. The U-2 can fly a more flexible pre-planned pattern.

3. With regard to weather, large masses of cloud cover, which usually move over the island from west to east, often obscure large parts of the land area. Haze is a common problem during much of the year, and cloud buildup precludes high-altitude reconnaissance by early afternoon. Experience during 1963 - 1964 has shown that there were periods when weather made it impossible to fulfill USIB requirements even when missions were flown almost daily. Weather is more likely to affect the success of the OXCART missions than it does the U-2, since the latter has better maneuverability to take advantage of predicted favorable weather.

Review of Requirements

4. COMOR considers that the current USIB intelligence requirements, with the exceptions noted below, can be satisfied by the number of OXCART missions as specified in paragraph 5, provided maximum advantage is taken of weather. Coverage of the Guantanamo area

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every two weeks can be accomplished by including it as a specific objective on each of two missions flown early in the month. These missions can also obtain considerable area coverage if one flight track follows the gentle arc of the northern half of the island and if the other acquires coverage of the Isle of Pines and the southern coastal areas. Accomplishing these missions early in the month affords the opportunity to evaluate mission success and to permit subsequent coverage of holidays while the second fortnightly coverage of Guantanamo is obtained. It is anticipated that these missions will also satisfy the 90 per cent area coverage requirement as well as coverage of the highest priority targets (see Tab A). It will not provide for two missions per week to stimulate the Cuban air defense system nor provide for additional missions to obtain special coverage.

Estimate of OXCART Missions needed from November 1964 to November 1965

5. The tabulation given below is an estimate of the number of OXCART missions COMOR considers are needed to fulfill the requirements as stated above. (Tabulation and Tab A not forwarded as there was no change.)

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